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Binkhorst, J.; Kingma, S.F.

published in

Journal of Risk Research
2012

DOI (link to publisher)

[10.1080/13669877.2012.686049](https://doi.org/10.1080/13669877.2012.686049)

document version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication in VU Research Portal](#)

citation for published version (APA)

Binkhorst, J., & Kingma, S. F. (2012). Safety vs. reputation: risk controversies in emerging policy networks regarding school safety in the Netherlands. *Journal of Risk Research*, 15(8), 913-935.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13669877.2012.686049>

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Publisher: Routledge

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Journal of Risk Research

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rjrr20>

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Joep Binkhorst & Sytze F. Kingma ^a

^a Organisation Sciences, VU University Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Version of record first published: 16 May 2012

To cite this article: Joep Binkhorst & Sytze F. Kingma (2012): Safety vs. reputation: risk controversies in emerging policy networks regarding school safety in the Netherlands, Journal of Risk Research, 15:8, 913-935

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13669877.2012.686049>

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Safety vs. reputation: risk controversies in emerging policy networks regarding school safety in the Netherlands

Joep Binkhorst and Sytze F. Kingma*

Organisation Sciences, VU University Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

(Received 31 August 2011; final version received 19 March 2012)

This article deals with risk controversies in emerging policy networks regarding school safety in the Netherlands. It offers a grounded account of the interpretations of school risks and safety measures by the various stakeholders of the policy network, in particular, schools, local government and the police. Theoretically, policy networks are conceived as mediating between the structural conditions of the ‘risk-society’ and the ‘culture of fear’ on the one hand and the institution of safety standards on the organizational level of schools on the other hand. It is argued that in the low-risk context of schools, it is particularly important to take into account the soft, cultural side of safety next to the hard, material side of safety. This distinction also accounts for the ambiguities and controversies over school risks. A further conclusion is that in this network a lack of local leadership seems to hinder the development of firm safety measures. Overall, this article highlights the paradox between a concern for safety and a concern for a school’s reputation.

Keywords: safety culture; schools; risk governance; policy networks; case study

1. Introduction

On 4 April 2008, the Dutch labour party, *de PvdA*, organized a conference on the topic of school safety.¹ At this conference city councilors of *de PvdA* reported about their investigations conducted in several Amsterdam schools and argued that there should be more openness and awareness concerning school safety problems. The politicians motivated their concern with reference to a number of severe incidents and to talk about serious underreport by schools of safety incidents. At that time, one of the major incidents with national media attention concerned the deadly stabbing of a 16-year-old pupil by a 15-year-old classmate in October 2007 at an Amsterdam technical high school. The family’s attorney argued that the stabber’s act should be regarded as an act of excessive self-defense because he had over a long time been bullied at school.²

Many stakeholders participated in the conference, including teachers, students, school managers, politicians, police officers, semi- and non-governmental organizations, scientists, and journalists. These actors all emphasized different aspects of the problem. The conference brought together the web of actors related to the school safety problem as it had emerged in the Netherlands in the first decade of the

*Corresponding author. Email: s.f.kingma@vu.nl

twenty-first century. In this sense, the conference could be regarded as an organizational manifestation of a network that usually cannot easily be identified or discovered since a network is dispersed and fragmented by definition (Castells 1996; Provan and Kenis 2008). At a conference, the network temporarily gathers. Organizationally, a conference can therefore be regarded as a 'field configuring event,' where people from diverse social organizations come together with the intent to construct an organizational field and to develop ideas about the way work in the field should be done (Lampel and Meyer 2008). Following the conference, we decided to research the network and reconstruct the risk conceptions and the ways the various stakeholders seek to manage school safety.

School safety refers to a remarkable new risk which contrasts sharply with the traditional image of a 'safe haven' for schools in the Netherlands. However, in the course of the 1990s, this image became under attack because of an increase in the number and severity of incidents and (inter)national media hypes regarding shootings, abuse, harassment, drugs, weapons, discrimination, and bullying at schools. In the Netherlands, these incidents and concerns triggered the emergence of school safety policy networks. But how can an organizational field, which until two decades ago was generally regarded as safe and unproblematic, rapidly develop a serious safety problem? This is the social riddle we would like to address. Although we deal with the Dutch situation, this issue is not unique for the Netherlands. Since the mid-1990s educational institutions in, for instance, the UK also 'responded to perceived threats to students, staff and learning communities with a range of security measures, including the introduction of closed-circuit television (CCTV)' (Hope 2009, 891).

The new concern for school safety might, in line with Beck's (1992) and Giddens's (1990) theories of the risk society, be seen as both a response to and a reflection on new risks which have emerged as unintended consequences of modernization processes. In Beck and Giddens's view, this development has resulted in a condition of 'reflexive modernization,' a condition which is characterized by a heightened awareness and preoccupation with the risks and dangers of modern societies (Beck, Giddens, and Lash 1994). Regarding safety and security, we also draw on the work of Furedi (2002), Boutellier (2008), and Boutellier and van Steden (2011), who address fear and a concern for safety as new organizing principles, which might be understood in terms of a counterpart or response to an increasingly uncertain and risky social environment. In line with these bodies of theories, we assume that the new concern for school safety can be understood as an expression of a more generalized concern with risk and a culture of fear.

The shift in perception from schools as 'safe havens' to places that are under constant threat and need protection from the wider society, also make schools a kind of anti-case or contrast case for so called 'high-reliability-organisations' (HRO) (Atak and Kingma 2011; Weick and Sutcliffe 2001). While HROs are often conceived as risk-producing organizations, schools should rather be conceived as 'low-reliability-organisations' (LRO), as comparatively open organizations with a low risk awareness and low safety standards. While risk and safety figure as prominent features of HROs, in the context of LROs such as schools a serious concern for risk and safety issues seems to be virtually absent. And while the social construction of safety in HROs figures around the possible neglect and maintenance of high safety standards, LROs are more concerned with the inverse processes regarding the identification of risks and the introduction and justification of safety measures.

In fact, the organizational level of policy networks might be regarded as mediating between the structural conditions of the risk society and a culture of fear on the one hand and the institution of safety standards on the actual level of schools on the other hand. By focusing on policy networks, we seek to contribute to an understanding of how general risks and fears are translated into safety standards at the organizational level. At the same instant, we might learn how schools contribute to the understandings of risk and safety in the wider society. Leading questions in this paper will therefore be: How can we understand the emergence of new school risk and school safety policies? How are school safety stakeholders defining and dealing with school risks and safety culture? How do they perceive safety measures such as cameras and detection systems? Can school safety actually be assessed and managed within the policy network? With reference to the way stakeholders are dealing with school risks it is also relevant to look at risks which are 'secondary' to safety such as 'reputational risk' (Power 2007; Power et al. 2009). School managers know that the way risks and safety are perceived by the public is very important. For such reasons, instead of simply managing primary risks, the risk of damaging the organization's reputation can become even more important. In this article we will, ultimately, highlight the tension between a concern for safety and a concern for reputation as a major contradictory force in shaping the emerging policy network regarding school safety in the Netherlands.

In this article, we first discuss the problematization of risk and school safety in relation to policy networks. Subsequently, the case study and the various stakeholders of the school safety network will be introduced. After that we analyze the risk controversies and safety policies put forward by the various stakeholders. Finally, we discuss the school risks and the paradox between safety and reputation.

2. School safety

School safety policy in this article will be conceived in terms of risk governance and of networks in which the 'horizontal relationships' between the various constitutive organizations of the policy network are stressed.

In line with Beck's (1992) and Giddens's (1990) theories of the risk society new risks are typically associated with technologically advanced, affluent, and individualized societies. Also the business world has adopted a new focus on security, resilience, and assurance which makes concepts of risk important for policy-making and organizational governance generally (Kingma 2008; Power 2007). Comparably, Furedi (2002) and in the Netherlands Boutellier (2008) and Boutellier and van Steden (2011), address and understand a 'culture of fear' (Furedi) and a 'safety utopia' (Boutellier) as a primary policy objective, as new organizing principles which might be understood in terms of a counterpart or response to an increasingly uncertain and risky social environment. However, as pointed out by Waiton (2008, 130–4), there are significant differences between the risk society discourse in line with Beck and the fear discourse in line with Furedi. These schools of thought offer distinct interpretations and explanations of the backgrounds and consequences of the contemporary risk and safety paradigm. This also bears on the understanding of risk in the context of schools. It would be a mistake to simply assume that these theoretical frameworks are complementary, i.e. the safety and fear framework is basically concerned with the consequences of the risk society. In fact, the fear and safety framework focuses both on different kinds of risk and different backgrounds to the

widespread concern with risk. Waiton (2008, 132) expresses the difference as follows:

Rather than risks emerging in relation to global threats, Furedi identifies how the emergence of a 'risk consciousness' has occurred at every level of society and has impacted upon all relationships and institutions. That children are identified as being almost permanently 'at risk', for example, cannot be explained by global developments, or simply in relation to the individualization of everyday life. Rather it is the end (or perhaps the suspension) of ideologies that held back the individuation of society for a century, which have collapsed and are central to understanding the culture of fear.

This difference makes a safety and fear perspective as developed by Furedi of immediate relevance to the school safety topic under consideration. In Waiton's account of Furedi, safety has become an 'organizing framework for institutions and for government,' and "child safety" is perhaps the best example of this development, with safety issues overhanging how children's activities are understood and indeed how we understand children themselves' (Waiton 2008, 8). Furedi's work especially deals with fears and victims of crime and anti-social behavior that could be related to the erosion of traditional moral standards which makes 'almost any form of behavior and outlook acceptable ... – as long as it is safe and does not disturb the safety of others' (Waiton 2008, 134). In this sense Furedi (2002) sees risk-taking as a consequence of a 'morality of low expectations.' This morality might even be reinforced by surveillance technologies such as CCTV, because if students are 'expected to misbehave, then deviancy may become perceived as a mundane, inevitable, everyday occurrence' (Hope 2009, 903).

Since risk is always defined by the difference between the actual and the possible, Furedi (2002, 24) relates the perception of risk and fear about the future to the anxieties for problems we face today. When we fear the future, one tends to assess the probability of adverse outcomes much higher (Furedi 2002, 26). Furedi argues that we have entered a stage in which we stress the 'intrinsic riskiness of virtually every type of human activity' and carry out risk assessments in the home, in school, in the workplace, and in leisure environments. The combined effect is to 'elevate safety into a cardinal virtue of contemporary society' (Ibid., 26). In Furedi's view, the present era is characterized by an 'inflation of danger,' a heightened sensitivity for dangers, the recognition of a range of new dangers and the enlargement of the possible bad consequences of natural, social, and technological risks. Because of this, for instance crime responses 'often take on panic-like proportions' (Ibid., 32). Furedi prioritizes the subjective over the objective dimension of risk and therefore regards the process of 'problematization' as key for the understanding of risks (Furedi 2002, 66). He illustrates this with the example of 'bullying' and 'sexual harassment' which both have a long history, but have only recently been defined as social problems. In a similar way, we will regard school safety as a new social problem. Although Furedi (2002) regards the problematization of risks as crucial, his work does not elaborate on how this 'problematization' works or should be conceptualized.

In line with Furedi's approach we will, on the organizational level of schools, not conceive of 'safety culture' as an objectively given condition, but rather as a socially constructed and relative organizational property dependent upon organizational values, meanings and safety practices (Atak and Kingma 2011;

Gherardi, Nicolini, and Odella 1998, 143; Richter and Koch 2004). Schools may claim to be 'safe,' but what this means in practice will for instance depend upon the risk perceptions, the precautionary measures, the kind of school, and the region or neighborhood where it is situated. Safety culture and safety policies should be conceptualized as a particular way of dealing with risks, or in other words with 'risk-governance' (Renn 2008).

In a risk governance approach, risks or the possible consequences of organizational decisions and actions, are converted into organizing principles and focal points in management processes (Hutter and Power 2005). In processes of risk governance, risk 'represents a specific way in which aspects of reality can be conceptualized and rendered controllable' (Taylor-Gooby and Zinn 2006, 45). Regarding organizational safety, Gherardi, Nicolini, and Odella (1998) indicate for instance that ambiguity is situated at the center of the social construction of safety since consensus and dissension are issue-specific and constantly fluctuating entities. They conceive of safety as 'an emergent property of a socio-technical system, as the end product of a process of social construction involving people, technologies and texts assembled into systems of material relations' (Gherardi, Nicolini, and Odella 1998, 203). Our empirical research therefore traces historically and qualitatively the emergence of a particular school safety policy network. In the process of internalizing threats, the actors of this network all in one way or another have to deal with the three basic questions, identified by Renn (2008, 40), regarding the '(un)desirability' of events, the 'uncertainty' of events and the 'conceptualization' of risks and safety. These three basic questions all depend upon cultural preferences and social context (Ibid.). Risk governance thus goes beyond straightforward risk assessments and risk regulations. According to Renn (2008, 9), 'risk governance looks at the complex web of actors, rules, conventions, processes and mechanisms concerned with how relevant risk information is collected, analyzed and communicated, and how management decisions are taken.' In this respect, this article offers an inventory of the risk conceptions about school safety as expressed by the various stakeholders. Following the risk governance approach, we are particularly concerned with the constitutive role of networks for the contemporary organization of school safety. Schools are embedded in networks of organizations in which school safety is problematized and safety measures are discussed and developed. School safety is organized in the horizontal 'nodal order' (Boutellier and van Steden 2011) of a network rather than in the hierarchical order of the government or the police. Because we are not only interested in the involvement of the network but also would like to learn about the composition and the effectiveness of the network, we more specifically refer to the work of Provan and Kenis (2008), who seek to relate various types of organizational networks to network outcomes. They distinguish between the logics and dynamics of 'participant-governed networks,' 'lead-organization networks,' and 'network administrative organizations' (NAOs). We will argue that the school safety network combines several features of these network types, and that the network also changes in character and effectiveness over time. This conception of networks will be further operationalized in the methods section.

An Actor-Network Theory (ANT) perspective (Callon 1986; Latour 2005) could further be particularly helpful in analyzing how schools 'problematize' safety, how new, safety management related, actors are 'interested' in and 'enrolled' in the institutional field of schools, and how research has been 'mobilized' to account for school safety and risk management strategies. The instances of 'problematization,'

‘enrollment,’ and ‘mobilization’ can be regarded as successive moments in the ‘translation’ of actor–networks (Callon, 1986). ANT may be helpful in analyzing the problematization of risks and at the same time account for the composition of the organizational safety network. The problematization of risks starts with how certain ‘risk objects’ are defined and translated by various actors in the network. In order to manage and counter risks, risks need to be defined accurately to prevent institutions from creating uncertainty themselves. Organizations therefore formulate their uncertainties into objects. The process of uncertainties becoming risk objects requires an analysis of the way these are ‘represented and constructed within organizational and managerial fields’ (Power 2007, 8). According to Power risk objects are:

essentially ideas about harm with implicit causality and may become the focus of ‘socio-technical networks’ understood as ‘seamless webs’ of elements and actors engaged in strategies for institutionalizing or de-institutionalizing particular objects of knowledge. (Power 2007, 25)

Regarding the risk objects and processes of risk translation, it is highly relevant to also look at risks which are ‘secondary’ to safety such as ‘reputational risk’ (Power et al. 2009). As mentioned in the introduction, we clearly noticed that school managers were very concerned with the way risk and safety is perceived by the public. A significant feature of school risk relates to the public image of schools and to their legitimacy. Contesting the perception of the public and policy-makers, or the ‘managing of reputational risk’ (Power 2007), is one of the strategies of school managers to legitimize school safety management. According to Power, the scope of risk management has definitely been broadened. Not only do organizations attempt to increase safety, but they also increasingly direct their attention towards reputation. Thus, schools and their stakeholders are highly concerned with the public perceptions on the risks they face. So, how do schools maintain a positive and safe image?

3. The case study

In the theoretical section, we outlined why we need to find out, in order to understand the problematical nature of school safety, how various stakeholders of the school safety network perceive risks and translate them into policies, actions, and other consequences. We analyze the network of organizations involved in the policy-making and construction of risks in relation to school safety. Differences in opinions and actions regarding school safety will be related to organizational culture, strategies, objectives, and interests of the stakeholders. The overall research strategy was qualitative. By adopting qualitative methods, we seek to ‘interpret or make sense of certain phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them’ (Denzin and Lincoln 1994). The approach is also holistic in order to preserve the complexities of human behavior.

The empirical research consisted in total of 16 in-depth and transcribed interviews with representatives of the involved organizations. Most of these interviews were conducted in spring 2009. In addition, all relevant documents were studied, including policy reports of the national and local government, the Amsterdam police department and the VIOS (Safety In and Around Schools) project organization. We further analyzed the media coverage of school safety issues and

observed the actual school settings and safety measures mentioned in this article. The sample of organizations included five secondary schools where we interviewed four ‘safety coordinators’ and one assistant manager. Of the ‘Association of Representatives of Amsterdam Schoolboards’ (OSVO), we conducted one interview with a board member and one interview with the project manager of the VIOS project. In addition, we also conducted an interview with the management of an applied research institute, DSP, involved in several school safety researches (DSP-groep 2008, 2009, 2010). Regarding the Amsterdam police department, we conducted interviews with four area officers, one district coordinator, and a school project manager. At the local Amsterdam government, we had one interview with an official of the social development department (DMO) and one interview with a district chairman (district ‘Geuzenveld-Slotermeer’).

The research focused on secondary schools in Amsterdam. In Amsterdam there are over 70 secondary schools scattered throughout the city covering all educational levels, school sizes, backgrounds, and population types. We visited five randomly selected secondary schools but made sure that they roughly covered a range of educational levels, size, and district locations. The educational level of two schools should be classified as high (HAVO-VWO), two were medium-leveled schools, (VMBO) and one was a low-level school offering education specifically adapted to pupils with some kind of deficit. Three of these schools were medium sized, facilitating between 600 and 1000 pupils. Two schools were relatively small, facilitating between 90 and 200 pupils. One school was located in Amsterdam East (Watergraafsmeer), three schools in Amsterdam West (Bos & Lommer, Osdorp and Slotermeer), and one school was located in Amsterdam Old-West. This sample can theoretically be regarded as fairly representative of the range of secondary schools in Amsterdam.

The research was based upon the principles of ‘grounded theory’ (Bernard 2002, 463 ff; Glaser and Strauss 1967; Suddaby 2006). These principles include the methods of ‘constant comparison’ and ‘theoretical sampling,’ which implies that the research evolves in an interactive process in which the researcher selects informants and develops conceptual categories and fills them with data until a certain level of saturation of the categories is reached, i.e. until the insights become increasingly repetitive. In this way, data collection and analysis are a simultaneous process. While conducting interviews, new themes and new directions and opportunities for the research emerged. With a general theoretical framework in mind, we sought to find out to which extent and how the theoretical themes were reflected in the interviews, documents, and school safety practice. This way, we combined inductive and deductive coding:

Starting with some general themes derived from reading the literature and adding more themes and subthemes as you go. (...) You have a general idea of what you’re after and you know at least what some of the big themes are, but you are still in a discovery mode, so you let new themes emerge from the texts as you go along. (Bernard 2002, 464–5)

Grounded theory is first and foremost directed at making statements about how actors interpret and construct reality and is not intended for testing hypotheses and theories. We are fully aware that grounded theory does not imply that one can do without literature and substantive theory (Suddaby 2006). Our research is clearly guided by the theoretical framework outlined in the previous section. In this sense,

our objective is not so much to develop completely 'new' theory but rather to elaborate, refine and substantiate risk governance theorizing with our understanding of the Dutch school safety policy network.

Before discussing the risk and safety conceptions of the school safety stakeholders, we will first analyze the network and overall school safety policy. Since schools are the primary subject of this policy, schools should perhaps be regarded as the most important stakeholder. The leading focus of our research consistently was on how schools are, or should in the views of the stakeholders be, dealing with safety. Overall, the research clearly indicated significant differences in the way school risks and safety issues were perceived between schools as well as between the various actors of the school safety policy network.

In operational terms, Provan and Kenis (2008, 231) define a network as 'a group of three or more legally autonomous organizations that work together to achieve not only their own goals but also a collective goal.' A focus on governance involves in their view 'the use of institutions and structures of authority and collaboration to allocate resources and to coordinate and control joint action across the network as a whole' (Ibid.). This includes the linking or sharing of information, goods, and competences between the constitutive organizations of the network. How organizations within a network cooperate should be considered 'the result of a partnership of different organizations involved; its quality is derived from teamwork between organizations – not from what each organization has to offer individually.' Besides, in this type of network 'every stakeholder is equally concerned with the faith and success of other organizations – not just their own' (Ibid.).

At the 2008 Amsterdam conference mentioned in the introduction to this article, there was indeed a widely shared feeling that cooperation between the various stakeholders is crucial for developing a successful school safety policy. All participants agreed that schools need to take common action and have to closely work together with the police and local government. The question remains, however, how effective and efficient cooperation could in this case actually be. Provan and Kenis (2008) stress that cooperation between organizations does not automatically make a network effective. While the idea of a network often is not much more than a group of actors (persons or organizations) that communicate intensively and that this communication itself makes the network effective, Provan and Kenis (2008) argue that the network needs some kind of design and control in order to be effective. In view of the effectiveness and efficiency of networks, Provan and Kenis (2008) distinguish three modes of network governance: The 'participant-governed network,' the 'leader-organization network,' and the NAO. Since we will seek to analyze and understand the Amsterdam school safety network in terms of these ideal types of network governance we will discuss these ideal types a little further.

A 'participant-governed network' entails different organizations that cooperate collectively, without a separate control unit. This is the most horizontally structured network type. Control of communal activities depends on the participants themselves. The participant-governed network has many highly involved participants, but it is relatively inefficient since all stakeholders communicate with each other, which makes it hard to find consensus among them. A 'leader-organization network' has vertical relationships in addition to the horizontal lines of communication. In this type of network, stakeholders share one common goal, and cooperate and interact with each other but all activities and major decisions are coordinated by the leading stakeholder. The leading stakeholder needs to be competent and

legitimate. A disadvantage of this network type is that the leading stakeholder might have a secret agenda and dominate other stakeholders. In the third mode of the NAO, stakeholders themselves create a separate entity with the task to manage and coordinate the network activities. The main difference with the leader organization network is that the managing entity does not coincide with one of the constitutive organizations. Its specialized task is to coordinate the network.

The most efficient and effective mode of network governance cannot be unambiguously defined beforehand. According to Provan and Kenis (2008, 237) four factors may explain the preference for one form of network governance over another: (1) trust among stakeholders; (2) size of the network; (3) goal consensus; and (4) need for network level competence. In a self-regulating network, trust is for instance essential but in case a network involves a large number of stakeholders the NAO model might be more efficient. In case of a leading organization network and a NAO, consensus does not need to be as high as in a self-regulating network. It is also important to define what the goals of a network are and what is externally expected from a network. For instance, in case a network needs to improve coordination, a leading organization or administrative organization is preferable. When external expectations are high, for instance in the case of subsidizing or sponsoring organizations the relevance of a leading actor or stakeholder increases as well.

4. Deconstructing the network

In this section, we analyze the Amsterdam school safety network from three organizational angles. First, we zoom in on schools as the primary subject of safety policy. Second, we analyze the network position of the local government to address the policy dimension. And third, we focus on the local police as the primary institutional safety specialist. We end this section with a discussion of how the dynamics between these stakeholders constitute the network.

4.1. Schools and safety coordinators

Most schools have a school board which has an important coordinating role in and between schools. In order to make policy, consensus is needed between school management and its board. The school boards are in their turn part of an association of school boards such as OSVO, the biggest school board association in Amsterdam. With regard to school safety OSVO initiated in 2001 the project 'Safety In and Around Schools' (VIOS) (Francissen and Hermans 2004). VIOS aimed at developing and enhancing collective and integral safety standards for schools in Amsterdam. The VIOS-project also directly supports and advises secondary schools in Amsterdam about safety management and safety measures. For schools, VIOS thus constitutes an important stakeholder regarding safety policy.

In 2005, VIOS was granted subsidies by the local government of Amsterdam. A precondition for schools to claim this subsidy was that schools had to appoint a so called 'safety coordinator' and that they should make a school safety plan. The safety coordinator is usually a staff member or a teacher who for a part of his or her time is assigned the task of dealing with safety issues in and around school. In practice, the VIOS network functions as a platform for the safety coordinators, to discuss, inspire, and learn from each other. Also school directors regularly get together to discuss safety policy issues, for instance regarding subsidies. Further,

school boards, police, city districts, and public transport representatives take part in the network in order to discuss and maintain a safe school environment.

The school safety coordinators are concerned with school safety on a practical level, dealing with the daily safety practices of a school. From the interviews, we learned that a safety coordinator's main concern is to guarantee a 'safe school climate.' This means, that they are not only involved in technical safety measures at schools, such as guarding the building or fire prevention, but that they are also concerned with the social dimension of safety. This dimension was typically addressed with statements such as 'a school is a place where people should feel like at home.' Schools seek to stimulate a cultural climate which prevents incidents such as fighting, bullying, stealing, discrimination, or sexual intimidation. However, within the everyday practice of schools there are considerable differences and controversies over what constitutes an incident. One safety coordinator told about this controversy:

I attended a VIOS meeting with other managers. This was at the beginning of a school year, and we already had about 80 incidents. But one of my colleagues [another school director] simply said: 'We have no incidents yet and hope to keep it this way.'
(Safety Coordinator I)

From the interviews, and by attending one of the safety coordinator meetings, it became clear that there is much discussion about how to define risks. There also is no unified approach on how to deal with incidents at schools. The way safety coordinators define and deal with incidents differs considerably. Differences in safety practices between schools stem on the one hand from internal factors, such as the safety policy of school management, as well as the background, preferences, experience, and other tasks of the safety coordinator. On the other hand, safety practices are also affected by the interactions and exchange of experiences between schools and safety coordinators. Although network actors learn from each other they have the autonomy to make their own decisions and develop their own approach towards safety.

A significant consequence of the differences in risk perceptions and lack of uniform standards has to do with the registration of incidents. At the time of our research (2009) incident registration was problematical and still in a process of development. Although schools all acknowledged the importance of incident registration they associated different meanings to this, as the above quotation illustrates. In particular, the Amsterdam government and police department pointed towards controversies about registration. We will discuss the issue of incident registration in a further section.

4.2. Local government and VIOS

Already since 1995, when the national government defined school safety as a priority issue, the Amsterdam municipality focused on school safety. Since secondary schools have pupils from various municipal districts, it is important that districts work together on this issue. School safety policy is centrally organized by the social development department (DMO) of the local government. However, since Amsterdam is considered too big to administer centrally, each district also coordinates school safety policy autonomously. Safety policy as formulated centrally is thus implemented, and can be adapted, in each district.

It will be clear that schools cannot be conceived as stand alone organizations. Not only are schools integrated in a larger network of school boards, the Amsterdam municipality also interferes in school safety. The Amsterdam municipality seeks to coordinate policy and advises schools. However, the network in two ways hinders the cooperation between schools and the local government. This firstly has to do with the way schools themselves deal with safety and how they involve stakeholders. Secondly, local safety policy is characterized by a bottom-up and demand-driven approach. Schools have to ask for support and advice before the local government will take action. Informants of the Amsterdam government stressed both constraints. According to them, school safety is an extremely sensitive topic for school managers to talk about. Although each school now manages safety, schools do not feel like discussing and sharing their safety problems with outsiders. School managers do not even like to share their safety concerns with government officials, inspectors, parents, or police officers.

Schools are very reluctant about having a debate on school safety on a higher level. [...] This is a pity because it hampers decision-making processes. They are pretty much beating around the bush. That's the problem. (Local Government Official)

This official believed that the local government should be a 'guardian of social safety' and should therefore have a leading role and bring all participants in the network on one line regarding safety. However, schools are not willing to openly discuss their safety problems because schools would then run the risk of damaging their reputation and lose pupils. According to the official quoted above 'the [market] competition among schools simply is very high.'

Schools tend to focus, understandably, on their primary task, which is education, and frame their safety issues with this task in mind. However, government officials believe that schools should also be concerned about other domains in a pupil's life, about what pupils do outside of a school's territory: 'What is their family like and how do they behave in public places?' (district chairman). Regarding safety, schools tend to narrowly focus on what happens inside the school gates. School managers do not regard it as their responsibility what happens on the street or at home. This is beyond the scope of a school's safety perspective.

The second hindrance to cooperation between schools and local government relates to the demand driven approach of the safety policy. Schools have to ask for advice, subsidies, equipment, or safety trainings. This made the local government dependent on school initiatives and did not lead to much interaction with schools regarding safety. The demand driven philosophy was based on the idea that school safety policy is not something you can easily implement in a top-down way because for many safety issues there are no straightforward and fixed solutions. Safety problems are often complex, involving many people and perspectives. Schools are often incorrectly seen as the site where safety issues arise. As remarked by a local government official: 'Schools are mirrors of society, not the other way around.' Insecurity should in this view not be perceived as originating in schools but rather as a consequence of a divers set of developments in the wider society. In this view other domains of life are seen as closely related to school safety.

As mentioned in the previous section, VIOS was conceived to work on a demand driven basis. This is logical because VIOS and the local government were immediately connected. The local government subsidized VIOS. Although VIOS

was expected to work on a demand driven basis, this did not work out in practice. According to a local government informant ‘things do not run smoothly.’ The demand driven approach led in his view to mostly accidental and arbitrary initiatives by schools. He mentioned that for example ‘the most assertive teacher might consider cyber bullying a problem and subsequently a school manager requests training on this.’ Despite the fact that schools occasionally contacted VIOS for advice and training, the local government considered the project a failure. VIOS and the demand-driven approach were no longer regarded as an effective strategy. Partly because of this ambiguity and partly because of overall budget cuts in 2010, the Amsterdam government ended the subsidies for VIOS and with this the entire VIOS project.

4.3. *The police and area officials*

The Amsterdam police department roughly consists of three segments covering 200 areas, five districts and one regional level. Since 2000 the Amsterdam police department employs over 200 so called ‘area officers.’ These officers are regarded as the ‘walking eyes’ that get close to the residents and schools in each neighborhood. The area officer is the immediate contact official for schools. This means that the police know who is working at these schools and that the schools have a direct contact in the police department.

The Amsterdam police is actively involved in school safety policy. A safe school according to the police is a school in which pupils and teachers are safe and feel safe. Police activities regarding school safety concern an array of precautionary, surveillance, protective, and repressive tasks. However, various police informants observed, similar to the informants from the government, a reluctant attitude by school managers towards sharing safety problems with other actors in the safety network. Although the police would like to express goodwill in being a safety partner of schools, and not merely checking on them, school managers do not like their schools being associated with any police activities. A regional manager of the Amsterdam police explained this dilemma as follows:

If your school is regularly visited by police officers, your school might be considered unsafe, whereas in reality, the opposite might be true. By regular visits, the police gets acquainted with your school, and you might know what to do, be even better prepared. (Project manager; Amsterdam police department)

As this police manager indicates, a school which is regularly visited by police officers might even be safer than a school where police officers hardly drop by and problems remain hidden or might be cropped up. Signing an alliance between schools and the police department is used as a means to improve and formalize the relationship between the police and schools. Formerly, the police had an official educational task in schools but this task has been ended. As a consequence the police also lost its immediate contact with schools. A formal alliance makes it easier for the police to stay informed and to get involved in school safety issues, such as how to deal with absentees and with regular checks on the lockers of pupils. An alliance further serves to make agreements and protocols about how to act in case of more serious incidents.

Although formal alliances and protocols between the police and schools have not been realized in every Amsterdam police area, most area officers do have some

kind of informal agreement and understanding with the schools in their area. The interviews with four area officers indicated that several factors influence the way agreements between the police and schools are set up in practice. On the one hand, the area officer's personality, experience, and attitude as well as the nature of the district make a difference. The nature of agreements on the other hand also depends on how schools manage safety and the extent to which schools are willing to share safety problems with the police. Area officers always have to balance their personal expertise with a school's safety preferences.

In order to be able to take preventive and protective measures, the police have to know what kind of incidents occur in a school. At the same time area officers believe that certain incidents, in particular the less serious incidents of course, should be settled by the schools themselves. An area officer explained how he sees this:

... I don't have to know everything; a school should be able to solve incidents internally. The school's autonomy should at all times be respected and maintained. Even when schools are transparent, they should be in a position to settle things on their own; I don't need to be involved in everything. (Area Officer I)

Officially, school safety is the school's responsibility. However, the question is in which cases school managers should report an incident to the police, for instance theft. In such cases, the role of the police is often explicitly discussed with the area officer. Whether the police will be involved might, according to a school manager, 'depend on the kind of pupil we are talking about. Is it just a novice or someone with a criminal record?' The balance between the autonomy of a school and police intervention shifts dependent on the pupil and the nature and severity of the incident. But when a school covers up safety incidents, the police cannot intervene at all. Therefore, the police require transparency and openness about safety in order to be able to balance interests. Alliances, agreements, and covenants serve as the primary tools for the police to further transparency and to reduce the reluctance on the part of schools to share information and involve the police.

5. School safety and new risks

The previous section set out the complexity of the network and the network dilemmas. In terms of Provan and Kenis (2008), the Amsterdam school safety policy network might be classified as a 'participant-governed network.' The autonomy and responsibility of the schools is very high and clear leadership of the network is lacking. At the same time, some stakeholders would like more rules and formal leadership in order to make the network more effective. The controversies over the success of the network partly have to do with differences in the risk conceptions of stakeholders. In this section, we zoom in on the stakeholder's risk perceptions and how they actually manage school safety.

5.1. School safety

Traditionally, in the Netherlands safety was perceived as a natural condition of schools. Schools were typically regarded as 'safe havens' as places that people could trust and where teachers, pupils, and parents could feel like at home. The image of a school as a safe haven was such that until the 1980s it was hardly

imaginable that school safety would develop into a social problem. School safety definitely had a positive connotation, as something you could rely on and not as something that was at stake.

However, partly triggered by some severe incidents both abroad and in the Netherlands, in the course of the 1990s school safety became subject of public debate. In the Netherlands, these incidents ranged from severe but rare incidents such as in 2004, in The Hague, the murder of the deputy headmaster by a 16-year-old criminal pupil at the Terra College, via serious scandals, especially relating to boarding schools, concerning sexual abuse of pupils by teachers, to common but relatively minor incidents triggering debates on bullying, ethnic discriminations, drug trafficking, and sexual intimidations at schools. In sum these incidents and debates seriously questioned and subverted the positive safety image of schools. Of course this change was not simply a consequence of incidents. In line with Furedi (2002) we rather suggest that both the incidents and change in perception are linked to wider social changes. Irrespective of the causes, the safety image of schools gradually but definitely assumed a more negative connotation. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, the new and widely shared idea became that politicians, local officials, the police, school managers, and parents should not be naïve. They better take protective measures and improve the surveillance of schools.

Safety in relation to schools should, in line with Loader and Walker's (2007) conception of safety, be regarded as 'a deeply rooted emotion, not only formulated negatively, as protection against threats, but at the same time positively, as security, friendliness, and feeling at "home"'. This understanding of safety takes both the positive and negative connotations of the concept into account. Various actors in the school safety network to a greater or lesser extent indeed expressed both safety dimensions. The balance between the positive and negative side of safety to a significant extent even accounted for the differences in risk conceptions and safety controversies. Differences in organizational interests, objectives, and cultural backgrounds of the stakeholders make it understandable why uniform and integrated conceptions of school risks and safety cannot easily be reached across the network. The network should rather be characterized by differentiated and ambiguous perspectives on school risks and safety.

Overall, we find that schools have a clear tendency towards the positive understanding of safety, as it relates to trust, security, friendliness, and feeling 'at home,' whereas the local government and police tend to emphasize the negative connotations relating to external dangers and threats. School informants talked about safety conditions inside schools rather than the threats they might have to face. They emphasized the paramount importance of security and a friendly atmosphere in schools, and the efforts that they make to maintain a safe climate. They did not stress the uncertainties caused by possible risks from the outside world. Because of their focus on a positive safety climate camera surveillance, for instance, is not always considered appropriate. According to this school manager, security depends in the first place on the quality of human interaction in schools:

You know, I see a school as 'man made'; and you can put as many controls as you like, such as cameras or detection gates, but the best way to achieve this [safety] is to involve people. We try to involve pupils and try to do things together. That also is much more fun. Of course this is labour-intensive, but you'll probably get an improved atmosphere because of this people centred approach. (Assistant School Manager)

In every day practice, schools focus on this ‘social’ or ‘soft’ side of safety. This implies that there is overlap between safety, education, and care, also in the roles of the safety coordinators. The safety coordinators for instance have ‘firm conversations’ with the pupils involved in incidents. But when safety is at stake the coordinators prefer to solve incidents in a pedagogical way. They regard this as an appropriate strategy because excessive violence in schools is still very rare. In the view of the safety coordinators, the daily safety practices do not require severe protective measures such as cameras, detection gates, or police intervention.

While the Amsterdam government subscribes to this pedagogical approach, its overall safety conception differs substantially from the schools’ conception. Policy-makers from the Amsterdam government take the social and political context of schools as the starting point for framing safety policy. They mention for instance social issues such as gay emancipation, ethnic discrimination, and Muslim radicalization as significant circumstances. One of the VIOS informants explicitly questioned the significance of such circumstances for school safety policy:

The government has a tendency to think that these [social] issues are very relevant to schools but to my opinion this is not the case’. According to him policy makers at the local government do not have a ‘realistic perception’ on safety because ‘the further a policy maker is from the actual situation [in schools], fear becomes a more important factor. (Project Manager VIOS)

In addition, the management of DSP group, a research agency that over the years conducted several researches about school safety, questioned the effectiveness of the local government’s school safety policy. They state that the local government often takes measures without evaluating the effects:

It’s always the same story. Someone in the city council says: ‘It is unsafe in our city; we need to install more cameras!’ So they install cameras. They easily spent a million on it. But they don’t know why they are installed, it’s not clear what to do with them, what the objective is. The whole organization behind it is unclear and no one even looks at the tapes! (Interview management DSP-group)

In the view of this researcher and school safety consultant technological measures such as camera surveillance have no proven effect and are expensive. Indeed, regarding schools research in the UK points towards limited and unintended effects of CCTV (Taylor 2010). An informant from the Amsterdam local government acknowledged the limited effects of the safety policy:

As public authority you want to do as much as possible. However, since our present society entails so many variables, making the right social policy is very complicated. The local government has to be realistic in what results may be expected. We strive to the maximal attainable. (Official Local Government)

The risk and safety conceptions of the Amsterdam police differ from both the schools and the local government. The main concern for the police, as discussed in the previous section, is to develop and maintain a good working relationship with the schools without damaging a school’s reputation. Given the two-sided view on safety discussed above, it is one of the police’s main tasks to protect people from dangers and threats. However, this obviously contradicts with the desired safety image of schools, which would like to express a positive feeling of security. While

the local government addresses both sides of the safety coin, and the schools primarily focus on the 'soft' side, the police is much more focused on the 'hard' surveillance and protective side. Therefore, in the safety policy network, the relationship between the schools and the police is the most controversial one. Police involvement might be perceived by the schools as a possible threat to their reputation, i.e. as a 'reputational risk.' One of the Amsterdam police officials explained this as follows:

'Schools state that a frequent contact with the police gives the impression of being unsafe. This disposition needs to change' ... 'in order for us to act adequately we need better cooperation by the schools' ... 'Schools have to assume that the police is a professional organisation which knows how to maintain the law.' (Project Manager, Amsterdam Police Department)

Because of the sensitivity of this topic, the police is very eager to accommodate to schools in order to establish a good working relationship.

Despite the different perspectives on school safety policy the stakeholders hardly address the controversies in emotional terms. They respect and understand each other's safety interests and perspectives and seek to develop and influence safety management in the direction of what from their point of view would be the most desirable and effective approach. In doing so the stakeholders primarily focus on the actual safety issues, rather than on what might possibly happen. In practice this means that they mainly focus on the high frequency, low consequence risks, rather than on taking protective measures against rare but severe threats such as shootings.

5.2. Risks and reputation

In this section, we further analyze the nature of the risks associated with school safety, and how the stakeholders manage and communicate them.

All stakeholders deal on a daily basis with risks associated with school safety. Dealing with risks always means accepting a certain level of uncertainty, especially in an open organizational environment such as a school. In fact, defining risks implies addressing the uncertainties one would like to bring under rational control (Luhmann 1993; Power 2007). A significant aspect of risk management consequently relates to the level of uncertainty that is considered acceptable. But why would school managers for instance accept the possibility of severe incidents happening in their schools? How can schools take such a risk without being corrected by the public or the government? A plausible explanation, according to Power (2007), relates to the significance of 'secondary' or reputational risks. A focus on reputational risk means that organizations are not only concerned with the primary risks but equally concerned with the public perception of that risk. For that reason, many kinds of organizations seek to reduce as much uncertainty as possible, for instance in the case of cars that are called back to the garage or in the case of food that might be contaminated. However, in the case of schools, this mechanism operates differently. Schools prefer an open, friendly atmosphere over a closed, unfriendly surveillance system that might enable them to counter most threats. In order to understand this different attitude to risks, we have to take a closer look at risk construction in the context of schools.

Table 1 provides an overview of most of the possible risk objects we came across during our research. These risk objects are based on the accounts of the

Table 1. Inventory of the various risk objects regarding school safety.

Risk object	School	Police	Local government
<i>Priority/responsibility (part 1)</i>			
Nail file	High	Low	Low
Scissors	High	Low	Low
Screwdriver	High	Low	Low
Alcohol	High	Medium	Medium
Drugs	High	Medium	Medium
Knife	High	High	High
Guns	High	High	High
Talking in class	Medium	Low	Low
Non-attendance	Medium	Medium	Medium
Using a phone	High	Low	Low
Calling names	High	Low	Low
(Cyber) Bullying	High	Low	Low
MSN	Medium	Low	Low
Pushing	Medium	Low	Low
Fighting	High	Medium	Medium
Angry parents	High	Medium	Medium
<i>Priority/responsibility (part 2)</i>			
Lock school doors	High	Medium	Medium
Thievery of a pen	Medium	Low	Low
Thievery of an Ipod	High	Medium	Medium
Small arsons	High	Medium	Medium
Stabbing	High	High	High
School shooting	High	High	High
Sexual intimidation	High	High	High
Threatening	High	High	High
Discrimination	High	Medium	Medium
Loverboys	Medium	High	High
Loitering	Medium	High	High
Home situation	Medium	Medium	High
Wandering at streets	Low	Medium	Medium
Citizenship	Low	Low	High
Radicalization	Low	High	High
Anti-social behavior	Low	Medium	High

respondents, policy documents, and media accounts. The table also provides an indication of the different weight stakeholders attach to these risk objects.

For most stakeholders in the school safety field, these risk objects constitute uncertainties and many of the stakeholders also are aware of them. However, the stakeholders do not take all risks equally seriously and would not like to include all of them in safety management policies. All stakeholders consider for instance weapons such as knives and guns as high-risk objects. But bringing a nail file or even scissors to school is in some schools prohibited while it has no priority for the police or for local government. For the latter, religious radicalization or anti-social behavior has a comparatively higher priority. There is, in short, always a subjective element involved in defining risk objects. Stereotypes and prejudices may therefore play a significant role in risk perceptions. Moreover, actively chasing risk objects might result in so called 'false negatives' and 'false positives.' For instance, how does one know whether a pupil carries a knife? When a student acts suspiciously he or she might unjustly be picked whereas someone who behaves correctly does

carry a knife and might even use it. Such false negatives and false positives are inevitable. In this way, chasing suspicious or risky behavior might threaten the positive safety climate of a school. Due to a strict safety policy, the open atmosphere of a school will almost certainly disappear. As an unintended consequence, the stress and strain among students and teachers might increase. In an open atmosphere, there is more opportunity to address tensions. A teacher referred to this as follows:

Whereas in the past bullying was interpreted as one of the unpleasant aspects of growing up, today it is seen as a pathology that deeply scars its victim. Fights at school, testing out the limits of acceptable behaviour is part of puberty and teenagers. (Teacher, PvdA Website, Amsterdam 2008)

This opinion concurs with Furedi's (2002) observation mentioned in the theoretical section that bullying is nowadays regarded as a social problem. However, being able to express discomfort can also be considered part of normal life. For such reasons, for instance small fights in schools are often regarded as acceptable or even as a learning experience for pupils. Many respondents actually referred to this line of reasoning. In the end, protective measures might 'suffocate' social life in schools. For such reasons, many respondents indicated that a school 'should not be turned into a prison.'

The fact that schools are often reluctant towards police involvement, information sharing, and a public debate on school safety, obviously relates to the idea that this would make safety risks manifest or 'visible.' School managers believe that the manifestation of risks affects their reputation and directly jeopardizes their trustful relationship with parents and pupils. Being associated with the police and publishing the nature and number of incidents might have this unintended and unwanted outcome. Whereas organizations such as airports, casinos, car manufacturers, or sport stadiums prefer to reduce uncertainties as much as possible, the level of acceptable uncertainty in schools is significantly higher. Taking more protective measures might improve the actual safety situation in schools, but the chances are that this would be at the expense of the safety feelings. Since the positive side of safety is closely associated with the identity and the desired organizational culture, Dutch schools are overall not (yet) willing to sacrifice this precious property for the sake of safety.

This dilemma is well illustrated with the problematical registration of safety incidents in schools. Sound registration is advocated from a safety management and policy point of view. This is much desired by the municipality and also by the Dutch government which from 2011 onwards even made the registration of safety incidents in schools obligatory. Schools should register safety incidents as completely and precisely as possible. This government desire obviously relates to a basic principle of surveillance which says that in order to control and normalize one first has to gather information and make behavior visible (cf. Foucault 1975).

The Amsterdam research bureau 'DSP group' was involved in the design of the safety incident registration system in schools, the so called IRIS system (DSP-groep 2010). In an interview, a manager of this research institute explained: 'by exactly registering what happens, schools are able to reflect on the results of the policies they deploy ...' However, despite the fact that incidents are registered anonymously, schools are very anxious about sharing sensitive information with others. Tests with registration systems clearly revealed that registration is often arbitrary or flawed,

because schools fear unwanted consequences (DSP-groep 2008). Some schools only register severe incidents (to keep the number of incidents low), while others focus on more frequent but less severe incidents (to keep the severity of incidents low). In any case, schools do not openly like to discuss what kinds of incidents occur. For as long as schools continue to have this ambivalent attitude towards risks, they remain reluctant to sharing and registering incidents.

Incident registration of the Internet based IRIS system is widely regarded as problematic and inaccurate. A first problem relates to the lack of uniformity in the definition of incidents. For registration purposes a long and diverse list of possible incidents, such as the inventory in Table 1, simply does not work. Therefore, a national standard has been designed (Mooij and de Wit 2009). This standard included three main categories: 'incidents immediately directed at persons' (violence, sexual abuse, threats, bullying, and discrimination), 'incidents not immediately directed at persons' (vandalism and theft), and incidents concerning 'illicit goods' (weapons and drugs). Based on this standard, the registration practice has been tested in 20 schools (DSP-groep 2010). Subsequently, since 2011, the IRIS registration practice of school safety incidents has been implemented nationwide. However, the first results of this registration practice are clearly ambivalent and have led to national media reports such as 'schools conceal violence,' 'schools are a less safe place than they were before,' and 'schools do not take action after acts of violence.'³ Such reports clearly are not favorable for a school's safety image.

The sensitivity of registration and the differences in registration practice are also revealed by the difference in outcomes between surveys and the IRIS registration system, for instance regarding the most prevalent safety incidents (Table 2) (DSP-groep 2009).

Table 2 indicates that compared to the IRIS system, the survey gives a higher victim percentage regarding bullying, discrimination, and weapons. The most likely explanation for this is that these categories refer to secret activities and therefore are not easily noticed and registered. On the other hand, there are also activities that tend to be reported more frequently in the registration system, such as theft, threats,

Table 2. Risks revealed by surveys and IRIS Registrations.

	Most prevalent incidents according to survey and to IRIS	
	Top 10 position	
	Survey	IRIS
Bullying	1	5
Fighting	2	2
Vandalism	3	3
Discrimination	4	10
Sexual intimidation	5	7
Weapons	6	-
Theft	7	1
Fire setting	8	9
Drugs	9	8
Threats	10	4
Maltreatment	-	6

Source: DSP-groep (2009, 6).

and maltreatment. Interestingly, the differences between surveys and the IRIS registration system seem to decrease for schools that report many incidents. Apparently schools that report a lot of incidents narrow the gap between the registrations and the 'real' level of incidents (DSP-groep 2009, 7).

6. Conclusion

In this article, we have outlined the emergence of a policy network regarding school safety in the Amsterdam region. We analyzed in particular three hubs of this network, the schools, the local government, and the police department. In our view, such a policy network mediates between the general conditions of the risk society (Beck 1992) and a culture of fear (Furedi 2002) on the one hand and the institution of safety standards at the organizational level of schools on the other hand. This is because school risks are related to a heightened risk sensitivity, to the redefinition of more and more uncertainties into risks and the (unrealistic) ultimate goal of exorcizing all dangers and creating a perfect safety situation. Indeed, as we have seen, school safety addresses relatively new risks and has emerged as a relatively new organizational property and policy issue in the Netherlands. Although our research is only explorative and this article does not make claims which go beyond the Dutch situation, the tentative conclusion is rather clear. In the Netherlands school safety policy has been mainly initiated, reinforced, and legitimated by some serious incidents and by the political and policy field outside of school organizations. It has only reluctantly been implemented by Dutch schools. At the same time, this policy intervention reveals a controversy between the risk and safety conceptions of schools and of safety policies. In this concluding paragraph, we would like to stress three significant aspects of this risk and safety controversy.

First, school safety is not at all a self-evident policy or management aspect of schools. On the contrary, as we have seen, schools tend to regard safety as a natural and integral condition of school culture which can even do without safety management. In this respect, they stress the soft side of safety as a friendly atmosphere and a positive safety feeling based on mutual trust. A focus on the soft side of safety may also explain the reluctance of schools towards the hard sides of safety as implied in protective measures, local safety policies, and police interference. The security view also favors a pedagogical (rather than a corrective) approach in dealing with rule breakers and incidents. Within schools, a certain range of asocial behavior is further considered 'normal' as long as it can be countered by the social control mechanisms in schools. This view does not count for severe incidents concerning extreme school violence of course. However, such incidents tend to be considered as exceptional and impossible to prevent anyway. In such a security context, the line between uncertainties and unacceptable risks is made dependent upon the circumstances and subjective interpretations. Schools are in this view also seen as a reflection of society, as an environment where you cannot completely rule out the dangers from the wider society.

Second, with the development of the local school safety policy in the first decade of the twenty-first century, Amsterdam schools developed a greater risk awareness and introduced specific safety measures. However, this did not imply the replacement of the school's soft security focus with a tough safety shield but rather the beginning of a transitional phase in which the schools negotiate safety standards with the local government and the police. This triggered the emergence of a school

safety policy network which involved an increasing number of safety actors. In this network the schools, the local government, the VIOS, and the police were the key safety stakeholders. These stakeholders related, as we have seen, their understanding of school safety to their specific organizational practice, i.e. their position, tasks, and interests within the network. In particular, the police tended to frame school risks and safety in terms of external threats and surveillance measures. The municipality tended towards a middle position in between the security view of schools and the safety view of the police. From the viewpoint of ANT, the emergence of a new safety policy went together with the translation of safety into the terms of the various organizational actors involved (Callon 1986; Gherardi, Nicolini, and Odella 1998; Latour 2005). By focusing on the risk and safety perceptions of schools, the government and the police, a light could be shed on how precisely safety policy can be conceived as a product and achievement of the entire network, and how the meaning of safety relates to organizational interests. It became clear that the network did not result in a uniform and unambiguous safety policy and in smooth cooperation between the various stakeholders. The network rather made controversies in risk perceptions and safety measures manifest.

In particular, Provan and Kenis's (2008) framework for network governance proved helpful in explaining the limited effectiveness of the school safety network. On first sight, the school safety network fits the 'participant-governed network' since it basically relies on the risk perceptions and interpretations of the various stakeholders, such as the safety coordinators at schools and the area officers of the police. However, as indicated by Provan and Kenis (2008), this model of network governance is most effective under conditions of trust among stakeholders, a relatively small size of the network, a consensus on goals, and low external expectations. Precisely these conditions are not met in the researched Amsterdam policy network: there is distrust among stakeholders, relating to the reluctance of schools towards cooperation with the government, and the police; with over 70 schools, the network's size is rather big; and there is a lack of consensus and to some extent even opposing views regarding both the causes of the school safety problem and the best safety solutions. As we have seen most stakeholders acknowledge these weaknesses and efforts were made to improve the effectiveness of the network, in particular by the local government and the police. These initiatives point towards the need of a network modification in the direction of what Provan and Kenis (2008) call a 'lead-organization network,' in which the local government would have to take a firm coordinating role, or an independent NAO such as the VIOS. Since the local government itself was not willing to take a leading role and the VIOS was abolished in 2010, greater effectiveness of the school safety network, by stronger leadership in order to overcome network controversies, seems for the moment unlikely. In this respect, our study draws a conclusion similar to Webster's conclusion regarding the diffusion of CCTV in the UK, namely that (local) government 'remains the dominant actor in the policy process through its ability to shape and influence networks' (Webster 2004, 230).

Third, the emerging policy network regarding school safety in the Amsterdam region implied the development and institution of new norms regarding school safety. These norms particularly address the differences and negotiations between the risk and safety opinions of schools on the one hand, and the local government and the police on the other. While the contradictions in interests and opinions have become manifest, these contradictions are at the same time respected and taken into

account by the various stakeholders, for instance in covenants and agreements between schools and police. In this respect, we have identified the possible threat to the reputation of schools as the major problem schools fear because of intrusive surveillance measures, incident registration, public safety reports, and police intervention. In a way the stakeholders have to recognize and deal with a 'secondary risk,' i.e. the 'reputational risk' (Power et al. 2009), schools face as a consequence of protective measures. The agreements in particular seek to overcome the reluctance by schools towards hard safety measures, which might even be counterproductive and undermine the security of schools, and the concern by the local government and the police over external threats on school safety from the wider society. The newly emerging safety culture therefore constitutes a hybrid safety culture in which a new temporary balance seems to be found between the 'soft' security side and the 'hard' surveillance side of safety. The new safety culture reflects a paradox between an increasing awareness of school risk and school reputation.

Notes

1. PvdA Amsterdam Website: <http://www.amsterdam.pvda.nl/nieuwsbericht/5270>, visited: 23 May 2008.
2. RTV-NH, 'Court of appeal confirms 11 months sentence for TEC stabber,' 22 July 2008.
3. de Telegraaf 16 December 2010; Scholen-weten-niet-om-te-gaan-met-hun-publicitaire-rampen.dhtml (VK. 5 April 2011); EénVandaag, 28 April 2011.

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